Censorship and Sympathy: Nationalist and Republican Approaches to the International Press During the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939)

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INTRODUCTION

The Spanish Civil War, shortly after the spark of Franco's rebellion in Morocco on July 17, 1936, attracted a great deal of international attention. Prior to the outbreak of hostilities, however, international interest in Spanish news was limited. Considered a "backwater" when compared to the major industrial and cultural centres in Europe, Spain was not considered particularly important to most international papers, even among those who had the resources to keep their own correspondent in Spain.[1] Minor exceptions came in the form of the 1934 uprising in Asturias and the election of the Popular Front in February 1936, both of which prompted some interest. *The Daily Telegraph*'s correspondent during the Civil War, Henry Buckley, began covering Spanish news as a freelancer in 1929.[2] Martha Gellhorn, similarly, arrived in Spain in 1937 with no official connection to any publication beyond a letter of introduction from an editor at *Collier's Weekly* — for whom she would eventually work as correspondent during the civil war.[3] This lack of formality was typical in the early days of the Civil War; the 'news net' was assembled out of freelancers and other contractors, alongside the rare staff correspondent. Eventually, as positions of both sides became more firmly entrenched, reporting on it became increasingly the purview of regular staff correspondents.[4]

The nature of the civil war quickly escalated from an attempted *coup d'état* in a "backwater" country to a conflict of international significance. This coincided with the rapid expansion of the foreign press presence, which played an instrumental role in shaping public opinion abroad. From the first few months of the war, both the Nationalist rebels and the Republican government forces established foreign press offices in major urban centres who were

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[1] David Deacon, *British News Media and the Spanish Civil War: Tomorrow May Be Too Late* (Edinburgh University Press, 2008), 48
[2] Henry Buckley, *The Life and Death of the Spanish Republic* (London: H Hamilton, 1940), 15
[3] Martha Gellhorn, *The Face of War* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1988), 14-16
[4] Deacon, *British News Media*, 49-51

tasked with checking documentation, censoring, briefing, and escorting — in other words, "managing" the foreign press. The aim of this thesis is to examine the approaches taken by both Republicans and Nationalists towards this task, and explore in greater depth how, and why, they varied, expanding on knowledge of wartime journalism in the interwar period. Beyond the personal political biases of journalists and the editorial biases of the newspapers they reported for, the approaches to press management employed by both sides of the conflict played a major role in shaping the way the conflict was represented to international audiences.

HISTORIOGRAPHY

The subject of the foreign press in Spain during the Civil War has long been of historical interest — particularly for historians of the media and scholars in the field of journalism — in large part because the conflict fit chronologically into a period of great transformation for the press in their home countries. As a result, most historical sources that deal with this subject come from works on the history of war correspondence, or alternatively on works about the Spanish Civil War, and they allocate at most a chapter to this specific subject. One such source is Phillip Knightley's *The First Casualty,*[5] which is perhaps the most comprehensive analysis of the history of the war correspondent from the Crimean War (1853-1856) to the Vietnam War (1955-1975). *The First Casualty* dedicates a chapter to the war correspondents of the Spanish Civil War, identifying it as particularly important to the history of the profession because of how uniquely the conflict aroused emotional and partisan sympathies.[6] Knightley argues that the partisan commitments of some of the war's key reporters, as well as the extent and depth of coverage of certain events like the bombing of Guernica, were crucial in both determining public sympathies, as well as the

[5] Phillip Knightley, *The First Casualty: From Crimea to Vietnam: The War Correspondent as Hero, Propagandist, and Myth Maker*. (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1975.)
[6] Ibid., 192.

popular narratives that surround the war.[7] Stanley Payne, in *The Spanish Civil War*, similarly states that the transformation and advancement of media technologies like radio and film resulted in this particular conflict reaching new heights as a propaganda and culture war outside of Spain — more so than the Russian Civil War, despite that conflict being similarly ideologically charged.[8] The end goal of that propaganda, Payne writes, was to influence international opinion and win public sympathy.[9] In Britain, for example, the objective of doing so would have been to pressure the Baldwin and Chamberlain governments to adjust or abandon their policy of non-intervention.[10]

Another key source for this thesis is Kevin Williams' *A New History of War Reporting*, a much more recent work which aims to provide a history of the work grounded in "the problems of 'doing' war reporting," and to overcome certain limitations in Knightley's work, namely by acknowledging the difficulties reporters actually face in publishing the "objective truth." Williams saw this as a shortcoming of Knightley's work given the comprehensive systems of censorship and state regulation under which journalists on both sides worked.[11]
Williams expands the scope from solely the correspondents' output in news publications to include the "literary writings" by journalists, which sheds greater light into the "mechanics" of war reporting by discussing how the work was actually done and what the challenges were. This broader interest in the output of correspondents is reflected also in David Deacon's *British News Media and the Spanish Civil War: Tomorrow May Be Too Late*, which also argues for the value of journalist memoirs which came from the Spanish Civil War as an "obvious" resource through which to explore the "activities, experiences and perceptions of the foreign journalists who

[7] Ibid., 193; 208-9
[8] Stanley G. Payne, *The Spanish Civil War*, (Cambridge University Press, 2012), 160-161
[9] Ibid.
[10] Brian Shelmerdine, *British Representations of the Spanish Civil War* (Manchester University Press, 2006), 151
[11] Kevin Williams, *A New History of War Reporting*. (Rutledge, 2020), 2.

reported directly on the events in Spain as the civil war unfolded."[12] In terms of sheer numbers, the wealth of memoirs published by foreign journalists during or shortly after the civil war suggests their value as historical evidence, including Martha Gellhorn's *The Face of War*, George Steer's *The Tree of Gernika*, Herbert Matthews' *A World In Revolution,* Arthur Koestler's *Spanish Testament*, and Noel Monks' *Eyewitness* — works which, much like the reporters in Spain themselves, run the gamut from authentic representations to overt propaganda efforts.[13] Some were published during the conflict, or very shortly thereafter (Orwell, Koestler, Steer) while others include their experiences in Spain within a broader reflection of their journalistic careers (Gellhorn, Capa) and thus, their participation in developing the narrative of the Spanish Civil War and influencing public opinion varies. Many of the works published during the conflict were journalistic in nature, representing another vehicle — beyond the newspaper — of informing the public about what was taking place in Spain.

Williams situates Spanish Civil War reporters and the media organizations they worked for as influenced by the failures of the journalistic profession during the First World War. He calls the First World War the "low point" of war reporting, arguing it was marred by propagandizing, spreading fear and known deceptions, and by concealment or omission of the truth.[14] When these failures of basic journalistic ethics and procedure came to light, most European countries saw a loss of public trust in the press, as well as a corresponding widespread recognition in the value of communication channels as propaganda tools by which to shape and influence public opinion.[15] Resulting from the crisis of public faith in the earlier interwar period, a new conception of war reporting was emerging among practitioners of the profession. This new

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[12] Deacon, *British News Media*, 45-47
[13] Ibid.
[14] Williams, *A New History of War Reporting*, 68
[15] O.W. Riegel, "Press, Radio, and the Spanish Civil War." *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 1 (1937), http://www.jstor.org/stable/2744812, 1

conception emphasized getting the entire truth to the public about war and its human consequences, and was not squeamish about circumventing official and military authorities when necessary to ensure the necessary information was printed.[16] To compensate for the failures of journalists in the First World War, this new generation — dubbed "I journalists" by some[17] — felt the need to go above and beyond certain established professional norms and standards to win back public trust and deliver what they felt to be truthful reporting, while attempting to deal with the "overwhelming challenge" posed by fascism.[18]

Williams, Knightley, and Deacon recognize the overly ideological character present in the minds of many war reporters at this time, with anti-fascist political inclinations being a significant characteristic of many reporters working on the Republican side. Knightley is quick to point out that the "I journalists" of the Spanish Civil War on both sides of the conflict held objective reporting in dubious regard, as exemplified by Gellhorn deriding "all that objectivity shit" and emphasizing her belief in the rightness of the fight against Fascism, as well as Herbert Matthews of the *New York Times* professing "honest, open bias" as the ideal attitude of the reporter.[19] Knightley mentions these examples alongside other figures, like Claud Cockburn of the *Daily Worker* and Cecil Gerahty of the *Daily Mail* — one reporting from the Republican side, the other from the Nationalists — whose reporting fell even shorter of objectivity and often strayed closer in many cases to overt fiction and propaganda.[20] Knightley acknowledges, however, that while reporters on the Republican side often held sympathy for the side they reported from, and the same was true on the Nationalist side, reporters with the Republicans generally had greater access to the front and were less heavily censored, while Nationalists

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[16] Williams, *A New History of War Reporting*, 88
[17] Ibid., 87; Deacon, *British News Media and the Spanish Civil War*, 45
[18] Williams, *A New History of War Reporting*, 88
[19] Ibid., 93; Knightley, *The First Casualty*, 193-195
[20] Ibid., 196-202.

maintained a much tighter grip on correspondents from their side, often providing them "official" accounts and news from the front rather than allowing them direct access. When reporters with the Nationalists were allowed to visit the front, or other sites of conflict, they were supervised by officers.[21]

Deacon also recognises the ideological saturation of reporting from this period, but identifies variance in how it manifested and to what extent it affected the veracity and reliability of the reporting. He assigns reporters into four categories — propagandists, partisans, sympathizers and agnostics. Propagandist is used to identify "those correspondents who were members or agents of a combatant force," a definition which describes more figures on the Republican side than the Nationalist.[22] Deacon recognizes this and acknowledges that most reporters from the Nationalist side could not be "members" of the combatant force to the same degree, but many colluded extensively with Nationalist authorities, so they can be legitimately classified as propagandists as well.[23] Partisans, by contrast, are defined as those who were "passionately committed" to one side but did not officially belong to any group or organisation.[24] Failures to report on misconduct on the part of the group they were "passionately committed" to constitutes sins of omission in Deacon's eyes, rather than commission — a distinction which Knightley does not make.[25] Sympathizers and agnostics both appear to have been sparser categories, and are defined as "those who identified with particular antagonists but whose ardour was more measured and conditional" and those who "did not connect to any significant extent with the politics of the conflict," focusing instead on its "intrinsic value as a news story," respectively.[26] Deacon's typology is insightful in many ways, though he notably does not state in

[21] Ibid., 206.
[22] Deacon, *British News Media and the Spanish Civil War*, 59-61
[23] Ibid., 61
[24] Ibid., 61-62
[25] Ibid., 62-63
[26] Ibid., 63-64

which category he might classify a figure like Orwell, who was a member of the *Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista* (POUM) but also wrote critically of the Republican regime and of left-wing publications that refused to publish these stories.[27]

Doubtless, much of the interest in war correspondence in this period comes from the correspondents themselves; figures like Ernest Hemingway and George Orwell, whose passionate involvement in the Republican cause motivated their involvement in the conflict as reporters, subsequently wrote impressive literary achievements which brought attention and conferred importance on the conflict. Hemingway's 1940 civil war novel *For Whom The Bell Tolls* and Orwell's 1938 memoir *Homage to Catalonia*, as well as his later and decidedly more famous *1984* — whose political critique of totalitarianism was substantially informed by his experiences with Soviet-aligned elements on the Republican side — both stand as examples of the kind of literary works that brought fame to the Spanish Civil War correspondent and created widespread interest in the war. While Orwell and Hemingway are perhaps the most famous writers who worked as journalists during the civil war, they were far from the only ones to do so; a number of other famous writers who reported in Spain include Gellhorn, John Dos Passos, Koestler, and Langston Hughes. As a result, probably as a result of their fame as much as the reality of their efforts during the conflict, much of the historical writing on the press in this period tends to emphasize figures like Hemingway, Gellhorn, and Capa in their analyses of the foreign press as a whole. Historical writing on this period does discuss other 'regular' journalists — for example, William P. Carney and Herbert Matthews of the *New York Times*, George Steer (*The Times*), Jay Allen (*Chicago Daily Tribune*), and Gerahty (*Daily Mail*) — as well as their more famous counterparts. These figures are treated, to some degree, as representative of the "kinds" of war reporting seen during the period. *The First Casualty* particularly focuses on the

[27] Williams, *A New History of War Reporting*, 96

consequences of abandoning objectivity as the "I journalism" generation had proudly done. The lack of objectivity is treated with greater nuance in Williams' and Deacon's writing — both of which are less interested in telling the story of where Spanish Civil War correspondents went wrong than they are in analyzing the state of the media industry at this time and the conditions under which it had to operate. Deacon suggests that the self-situating nature of reporting at this time, where reporters were on scene to serve as eyewitnesses and provide firsthand accounts to send home, represented a change to journalistic discourse, motivated by the loss of faith in government communiqués as accurate sources of information. There was now an expectation that the events described had been witnessed firsthand, which conferred a degree of veracity to the printed account.[28] Other sources consulted include Herbert Rutledge Southwell's *Guernica! Guernica!* which provides an exhaustive study of the bombing of the Basque town in April 1937, and Paul Preston's *We Saw Spain Die: Foreign Correspondents in the Spanish Civil War*.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Although the Spanish Civil War began in earnest on 17 and 18 July, 1936, with the attempted *coup d'état* led by senior figures in Spain's military, its origins lay earlier in Spain's history. Despite remaining neutral in the First World War, Spain, like many European nations, experienced a tumultuous interwar period. A 'crisis' in 1917 was followed by a series of strikes and violent risings in areas of southern Spain from 1918 to 1920.[29] Additionally, the question of regional independence became a persistent problem for the regime of King Alfonso XIII, as industrial development had expanded significantly in the 19th century in Barcelona, creating a Catalan bourgeoisie whose frustration with the shortcomings of the central government coincided

[28] Deacon, *British News Media and the Spanish Civil War,* 45-47
[29] Paul Preston, *The Spanish Civil War 1936-1939* (Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1986), 16

with the growth of the Catalan nationalist movement, as well as the emergence of a major left-wing movement, Anarcho-syndicalism.[30] Finally, the eruption of conflict in Morocco in 1921, which resulted in an embarrassing military defeat, coincided with domestic unrest and dissatisfaction in the ranks of the Spanish Army. In 1923, General Miguel Primo de Rivera came to power, ousting the government of Manuel García Prieto through a *pronunciamiento* and ruling through dictatorship until 1930. Following Primo de Rivera's resignation in January 1930, Alfonso XIII appointed another military dictator in the form of General Dámaso Berenguer, whom he replaced by Admiral Juan Batista Aznar-Cabañas in February 1931 as civilian and military opposition to the regime grew.[31] After elections were held in April of that year, Aznar-Cabañas presented his resignation to Alfonso XIII and the Republic was declared. Rather than attempting to contest the results or rule through another appointed figure, Alfonso XIII and his family left Spain.

The years of the Republic were similarly challenging. In addition to the slate of tasks liberal republicans and socialists sought to address — land reform, Basque and Catalan autonomy, separation of Church and state, and reorganisation of the military — the new government also inherited the debts and mistakes of the Primo de Rivera regime.[32] Paul Preston writes that the origins of the Spanish Civil War lay in this period, wherein the progressive leadership of the Republic pursued a course of reforms which ran counter to the entrenched powers in Spanish society.[33] These were, invariably, the military and the Catholic Church, as well as wealthy landowners. At this time, Preston argues, the Spanish right had become thoroughly saturated in the authoritarianism of the Primo de Rivera regime and could not envision a return to

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[30] Hugh Thomas, *The Spanish Civil War* (Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1961), 14-15
[31] Antony Beevor, *The Battle for Spain: The Spanish Civil War 1936-1939* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2006), 18-19
[32] Ibid., 21
[33] Preston, *The Spanish Civil War*, 20-21

pre-1923 politics.[34] Thus, as the political objectives pursued by the Republicans were pitted against the traditional pillars of Spanish society — the Church, the military, and the *latifundia* estate system — it also became more likely that right-wing opposition would manifest itself in attempts to establish a new dictatorship rather than a democratic alternative. Particularly odious to the upper echelons of the military was the concession of regional autonomy, which was regarded as a violation of Spanish national unity, as well as the restructuring of the Spanish Army pursued by then-Minister of War Manuel Azaña.[35] Aiming to make the army more efficient as well as reduce its bloated officer corps — Hugh Thomas writes that, in the final years of the monarchy, Spain's army had 19,906 officers for 207,000 enlisted men — Azaña's ironically generous reform of allowing 8,000 excess officers to retire with full pay only enabled these officers the time and financial security to conspire against the Republic.[36] Further, his reforms targeted the Law of Jurisdictions — a law dating from 1906, which granted military jurisdiction over civilians accused of insulting the nation, flag, or army — which was seen as an attack on the privileged position of the army in Spanish society.

Such opposition emerged in the form of the fascist *Falange Española* in 1933, as well as in military conspiracy; in August 1932, monarchist General José Sanjurjo led an attempted *coup d'état* against the Republic which was easily suppressed. Sanjurjo's attempted *coup d'état* provided the *Cortes Generales* (the legislative body of the Second Spanish Republic)a sense of urgency, resulting in the rapid passage of controversial legislation like Catalonia's statute of autonomy, but the 1933 general election resulted in a much more conservative government,

[34] Ibid., 16-17
[35] Ibid., 23
[36] Thomas, *The Spanish Civil War*, 53; Preston, *The Spanish Civil War*, 23

which then freed Sanjurjo alongside many of his co-conspirators, allowing him to go into exile in Portugal.[37]

From 1933 to 1936, Spain became increasingly polarized and tensions reached new heights. Although the right-wing *Confederación Española de Derechas Autónomas* (CEDA) won the most seats in the election, their leader, José María Gil-Robles y Quiñones, was passed over for the Prime Ministership by President Niceto Alcalá Zamora in favour of Alejandro Lerroux of the Radical Republican Party.[38] The Radicals, relying on CEDA votes in the *Cortes*, nonetheless pursued a conservative political programme which incensed socialists and left-wing Republicans. Anarchists attempted an uprising in December 1933, which was swiftly crushed by the government, was followed by mounting street violence and evidence of further political radicalization. Gil Robles of the CEDA, ostensibly still committed to democratic governance, nonetheless held Fascist-style rallies where members of CEDA's youth movement hailed him with chants of "*¡Jefe!"* in the same spirit Italian fascists would address their *Duce* or Germans their *Führer*. By this point, however, major sections of the political right were shifting away from Gil Robles and towards even more extreme figures like José Antonio Primo de Rivera (of the Falange), Manuel Fal Condé (of the Carlists) and the monarchist José Calvo Sotelo. Gil Robles nonetheless continued to refuse to swear loyalty to the Republic and employ authoritarian rhetoric at CEDA rallies.[39]

Elections in 1936 narrowly resulted in a left-wing victory, electing the Popular Front government of Manuel Azaña. Election materials reflected the political tensions, which by this point had reached a fever pitch; CEDA took inspiration from Nazi Party materials, basing their campaign around the threat of Marxism, while the Popular Front campaign focused on the

[37] Beevor, *The Battle for Spain*, 26.
[38] Preston, *The Spanish Civil War*, 33
[39] Ibid., 34-35

dangers of fascism.[40] Figures on the right, such as Gil Robles, were already exploring the possibility of staging a *coup d'état* against the Republic, but the generals he approached — many of whom would become figureheads in the Nationalist insurrection later that year — felt the time was not right.[41] Meanwhile, the right became increasingly extreme; abandoning Gil Robles for Calvo Sotelo as moderation seemed a dead end. Members of CEDA's youth movement were drawn over in large numbers to the Falange, and street violence between left- and right-wing paramilitaries increased, creating an atmosphere in which cooperation across the political aisle seemed impossible.[42] On July 12, 1936, Falangist hitmen murdered a Republican Assault Guard officer, José del Castillo. As retribution, several of Castillo's fellow officers decided to murder a major politician from the political right. While they were unable to find Gil Robles, Castillo's comrades succeeded in carrying out the assassination of Calvo Sotelo, which was exploited by conspirators in the military to further their narrative that Spain was descending into anarchy, and required military intervention to reestablish order.[43] The beginning of the civil war came just a few days later, with the *coup d'état* planned by senior military officials — Francisco Franco, Manuel Goded, Emilio Mola, and José Sanjurjo. They had arranged for Franco to leave the Canary Islands, where he had been transferred due to suspicions about his loyalties, and head for Morocco, where he could assume control of the elite Army of Africa.[44] From there, a coordinated rising of rebel military officers and their troops occurred — the Army of African in Morocco on July 17th, and divisions in mainland Spain the following day.[45] From there, the factions of the civil war were decided; accounts of the conflict typically use the terms "loyalist" and "Republican" to refer to the coalition of forces who fought to preserve the Republic proclaimed

[40] Ibid., 39-41
[41] Ibid.
[42] Ibid., 40-44
[43] Thomas, *The Spanish Civil War*, 120-124; Preston, *The Spanish Civil War*, 48.
[44] Ibid., 48-49; Beevor, *The Battle for Spain*, 55-58
[45] Ibid.

in 1931. The opposing forces, variably referred to as "insurgent," "rebel," "Nationalist," and sometimes "fascist," were those who rose on 17 and 18 July 1936, aiming to overthrow the Republican government and replace it with some form of dictatorship. At this time, the dictatorship of *Caudillo* Francisco Franco was not the guaranteed outcome of the war. Most historians agree that General José Sanjurjo of the 1932 revolt or General Emilio Mola were the most likely candidates at the time of the rising.[46]

Providing a full account of the war is beyond the scope of this chapter. However, a significant aspect of the war to which attention must be drawn is its international significance — from nearly the beginning, the importance of the Spanish Civil War far exceeded the nation's own borders. As early as the second week of the conflict, Nationalist forces were appealing to Mussolini in Italy for support, requesting aid in the form of aircraft. He initially turned them down, but by July 24th, incensed by the possibility of French aid reaching the Republic, Italy relented and promised the Nationalist delegation twelve Savoia-Marchetti bombers.[47] Germany was more immediately receptive to the Nationalists' plight, providing them additional air resources in the form of Junkers JU-52 transport aircraft and Heinkel fighters (piloted by Luftwaffe pilots who were instructed to volunteer). Shortly thereafter, the two powers would also provide the Nationalists with weapons and ammunition. Military aid from sympathetic foreign powers facilitated Nationalist objectives in the crucial early days of the conflict — as Preston put it, Hitler "turned a *coup d'état* that was going wrong into a bloody and prolonged civil war."[48] With their newly acquired air capabilities, the Nationalists were able to transport their forces stationed in Morocco across to mainland Spain.[49] The Republican side, meanwhile, appealed first

[46] Ibid., 45, 59
[47] Ibid., 60
[48] Preston, *The Spanish Civil War*, 60
[49] Beevor, *The Battle for Spain*, 134-135

to France for aid in the form of arms sales.[50] Despite President Léon Blum's initial willingness to support the Republic, France eventually fell in line with the British policy of non-intervention — a decision that prevented supplies from reaching the Republic, while allowing Italy and Germany to continue furnishing the Nationalists with their military needs — due to their own interest in not provoking existing fascist powers.[51] The Republicans eventually found support from Mexico and the USSR, who supplied Republican forces with arms, food, ammunition, and oil.[52] They would also find significant support in the International Brigades — Comintern-organised forces comprising volunteers from a number of nations including the United Kingdom, France, Italy Germany, and the United States, among many others.[53] The decision to volunteer was undoubtedly shaped by a perception that the conflict in Spain was consequential beyond the nation's own borders, and more often than not sympathy for the plight of the Spanish people. This attitude also informed the spirit of wartime reporting.

By the outbreak of the civil war in 1936, the profession of war correspondent had undergone a significant transformation. The Crimean War is considered by many to mark the birth of the profession in its modern form, wherein the details of the conflict were reported to the public back home by civilian correspondents in the field. In many of the conflicts in the latter half of the 19th century, the correspondent was largely free to report as he saw fit. In other words, he experienced little censorship or interference from military authorities — who are described by Phillip Knightley as "slow to realize the power" of public opinion from the growing population of newspaper readers.[54] British authorities, Knightley writes, did realize the potential impact on public opinion of correspondent William Howard Russell of *The Times*, whose reports

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[50] Ibid., 131-132
[51] Ibid., 132-133; Preston, *The Spanish Civil War*, 74-75
[52] Ibid., 139-140.
[53] Beevor, *The Battle for Spain*, 157-164
[54] Knightley, *The First Casualty*, 42

from Crimea often castigated British military conduct and the inferiority of the resources made available to their troops in comparison to French forces. Consequently, the authorities admitted the necessity of some form of censorship, but it was largely limited to preventing the spread of information that could be of strategic importance to their enemies, as well as minor counter-propaganda efforts designed to restore confidence in the war.[55] Organised press censorship would only come into effect, for British outlets, during the Boer War and First World War. In the intervening years, the news-reading public grew substantially, alongside the rising demand for war stories. In the years after the Crimean War — often considered the "Golden Age" of war correspondence —newspapers realized the budding demand for war stories.[56] Correspondence during this period was often highly adventurous and romantic, detailing the exciting details of battles but showing little consideration of the human cost or political ramifications.[57] This was in part due to the distance of the conflicts, which were far from the home countries of readers and thus the consequences of war meant little to them. It was also the result of the image of war which had been cultivated by previous means of representation — sketches that did not depict excess quantities of blood — and the fact that many of these conflicts were imperial in nature. Especially in the British context, war reporters in Sudan, India and Abyssinia (Ethiopia) often shared the imperial views of the military, and their reporting was written in a way that justified British imperial ambitions.[58] Meanwhile, advancements in technology like the telegraph and photography coincided with an increasingly wealthy press. Newspapers found it easier than ever to send their correspondents abroad, and were more capable of footing the bill for the corresponding expenses — for example, sending a telegraph

[55] Ibid., 14-17
[56] Ibid., 20
[57] Ibid., 42
[58] Williams, *A New History of War Reporting*, 50-58

over long distances. The advent of the telegraph and correspondents' easier access to it also enabled more rapid reporting of events; rather than news of a battle being printed in the news the following week, it could be done a day or two later.[59]

By the time of the First World War, a system of rigorous press censorship had been established, which the British had made extensive use of during the Boer War.[60] The British and French press were systematically muzzled, prevented from reporting the "actual facts" of what was going on at the front in order to preserve public support for the war effort, and a similar program of censorship was carried out on the German side. British forces at the front were under instruction to arrest war correspondents, partially at the behest of Lord Kitchener, who had a longstanding contempt of them.[61] Meanwhile, the "eyewitness" accounts which returned home had been officially vetted by senior military officials, and ranged from dishonest misrepresentations to overt fabrications — in the case of the many atrocity stories designed to incense the public at the barbarity of the "Hun" — which served the propaganda goals of the military. By the end of the war, public faith in the press was at a record low, leading many in the press to see that change was needed if their profession were to continue.[62] In Britain, the involvement of newspapers with the British government was highly controversial, as made evident by the appointment of prominent newspaper owners like Lord Beaverbrook and Lord Northcliffe into senior government positions.[63] The falsehood of widespread atrocity stories, such as the German "corpse conversion factory," was exposed a few years later during House of

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[59] Knightley, *The First Casualty*, 42
[60] Ibid., 77
[61] Ibid., 85
[62] Ibid., 170; Williams, *A New History of War Reporting*, 68
[63] Michael Sanders and Phillip M. Taylor, *British Propaganda during the First World War, 1914-18* (London: Bloomsbury, 1982), 259-260; Alice Goldfarb Marquis, "Words as Weapons: Propaganda in Britain and Germany during the First World War" *Journal of Contemporary History* 13, no.3 (1978), 473-474

Commons debates in 1925 and by Arthur Ponsonby's *Falsehood in Wartime*, published in 1928.[64] At the same time, the incredible power of press regulation and censorship had been demonstrated to militaries and governments across the world.

REPUBLICAN PRESS MANAGEMENT

Although the international press presence in Spain was extensive on both sides of the civil war, the majority of foreign journalists who reported on the conflict did so from the Republican side. David Deacon writes in his study of British and North American journalists that, of the 146 journalists whose location during the conflict can be definitively placed, 80 — more than half — reported exclusively from the Republic, while only 46 reported only from territory held by Nationalist forces. The remaining 20 of these journalists reported from both sides, with the majority beginning on the rebel side before relocating to Republican-held zones.[65] Martin Minchom also notes that the Havas news agency was permitted four correspondents in loyalist Spain, whereas the Nationalists permitted them only two.[66] This discrepancy is best explained by the willingness of Republican press authorities to permit journalists of all backgrounds to report from areas they controlled — a characteristic not shared by their opponents — and because the Nationalists imposed stricter limits on the number of journalists permitted. Additionally, Republican authorities welcomed correspondents — for example, Noel Monks[67] — who had previously worked on the other side, while the Nationalists did not.[68] Many of the highest-calibre names in twentieth-century journalism — Herbert Matthews, George L. Steer, Jay Allen, and Martha Gellhorn — featured among these reporters, and subsequently

[64] Sanders and Taylor, *British Propaganda*, 146-148.
[65] Deacon, *British News Media and the Spanish Civil War*, 51-52
[66] Martin Minchom, *The Spanish Civil War in the British and French Press* (Liverpool University Press, 2024), 47
[67] Noel Monks, *Eyewitness* (London, Frederick Muller, 1955), 84
[68] Deacon, *British News Media and the Spanish Civil War*, 26

wrote of their experiences on the ground, providing invaluable insights into their work environment during the conflict, the challenges they faced, and how what they saw in the conflict affected them. Major figures on the other side — censors and press authorities, responsible for facilitating the work of foreign correspondents and controlling the spread of information — also wrote of their experiences, providing even greater depth to our understanding of press management and the media environment during the civil war.

Due to limitations in the transmission capabilities on the Republican side, most foreign correspondents were consolidated in the major urban centres of the Republic — Madrid, Valencia, Bilbao, and Barcelona.[69] Despite efforts to modernize communication and expand the domestic telephone network under Primo de Rivera in the 1920s, international connections remained limited to Madrid, Barcelona, and Valencia, while the main international cable connections were in these cities as well as in Vigo, Bilbao, and Malaga.[70] The Telefónica building in Madrid, which would house the Republican press office during the civil war, was constructed under the de Rivera regime.[71] Other correspondents who were not based out of these cities would often cross the border to pursue their stories or observe the front, and then return safely across the border where they could relay their dispatches back home. Cross-border reporting was primarily a feature of the early war, and border reporters did so from a range of locations — Gibraltar, Portugal, the Tangier International Zone, and the French towns of Hendaye and Saint-Jean-de-Luz.[72] Deacon writes that this style of reporting "compromised" the control of both Republican and Nationalist factions over the information relayed, but it also became increasingly unreliable as the actual fighting moved further from the border.[73] Faced with

[69] Herbert L. Matthews, *A World in Revolution: A Newspaperman's Memoir* (New York: Scribner's, 1971), 21; Deacon, *British News Media and the Spanish Civil War*, 51
[70] Ibid., 18-20.
[71] Minchom, *The Spanish Civil War in the British and French Press*, 28
[72] Ibid., 32-33
[73] Deacon, *British News Media and the Spanish Civil War*, 52

increasing distance from the actual fighting, these correspondents would have had to travel further and further or accept often speculative or unreliable sources in place of their own eyewitness accounts.

Herbert Matthews, correspondent for *The New York Times* from the Republican side, attests to the extent of freedom he had while covering the war; "There were virtually no restrictions on where we went or what we did… A correspondent could go to the front lines, watch a battle, join an advance, or fall back with the troops in a retreat."[74] So long as transportation could be arranged, correspondents in the Republican areas of Spain with the correct documentation were free to travel as they pleased — and transportation, in the form of a vehicle and a driver, was often provided to correspondents by the Republican press authorities themselves.[75] The greatest restriction on movement faced by correspondents in Republican areas came from insufficient resources; while correspondents were free to move without a military escort, cars and gasoline were often hard to come by — and those provided by the Republican government were often saved for correspondents from major outlets.[76] This freedom allowed the somewhat comic anecdote in which Ernest Hemingway, while covering the war from the Republican side as a correspondent for the North American Newspaper Alliance (NANA), reportedly fired a lengthy barrage of bullets from a machine gun while instructing International Brigade volunteers but did not stay for the retaliatory artillery bombardment.[77]

In other instances, however, the freedom of movement allowed correspondents from the Republican side unparalleled access to the front, enabling them to correct the record and reveal significant developments in the conflict that were of major public interest in their home

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[74] Ibid.
[75] Paul Preston, *We Saw Spain Die: Foreign Correspondents in the Spanish Civil War* (Constable & Robinson, 2008), 31.
[76] Minchom, *The Spanish Civil War in the British and French Press*, 52-53
[77] Knightley, *The First Casualty*, 193.

countries. Matthews, in his memoir *A World in Revolution*, details a story he broke in 1937 after travelling to cover the aftermath of a failed Nationalist assault to the north of Madrid, near Guadalajara. When he arrived, he was able to interview prisoners Republican forces had managed to capture from the remnants of the Nationalist force. Much to Matthews surprise, the Nationalist divisions involved in the attack were made up of Italians — the first evidence that Mussolini had sent combatants to Spain, in addition to the small arms, artillery, and military advisors he was providing the insurgent forces[78] In another instance, Matthews, alongside Hemingway, photographer Robert Capa, and British war correspondent Sefton Delmer of the *Daily Express*, made numerous trips to the Aragonese city of Teruel, which had been subject to constant counterattacks by Nationalist forces after it was taken by the Republicans in December 1937. Matthews' account of the bitter fighting fell in stark contrast to *The New York Times*' correspondent on the Nationalist side, William P. Carney, who prematurely cabled New York with news that the Nationalist forces had successfully retaken the city — despite the fact that the Nationalists would not regain control of Teruel until February 22, 1938, and would spend another few weeks continuing to push the Republican defenders back.[79] The account of the Republican defense of Teruel provided by Matthews to *The New York Times* on January 5 is illuminating as a military record from the battle, but also as an example of both the disparity in journalistic standards from the two *New York Times* correspondents and of the extent to which many correspondents on the Republican side went to uncover the "real story." It reads:

> The Insurgent counter-offensive against Teruel has failed. From your correspondent's inquiry on the spot yesterday, it seems certain that the Rebels never reached the city, never made contact with the garrison and refugees in the cellars of Teruel … and in short never really menaced the provincial capital, which remains firmly in Government hands.

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[78] Matthews, *A World in Revolution*, 25-26.
[79] Matthews, *A World in Revolution*, 28-30; Knightley, *The First Casualty*, 199; Beevor, *The Battle for Spain*, 322

> It has been axiomatic in this war that nothing can be learned with certainty unless one goes to the spot and sees with his own eyes. This writer has just returned from Teruel.[80]

Matthews goes on to describe the lengthy "three-day journey over snow-blocked roads" which he undertook, establishing his credibility as a witness to readers. The correspondents and press management on the Nationalist side of the conflict will be explored in greater depth in the next chapter, but for now, it is valuable to consider a corresponding account by an *Associated Press* correspondent out of Hendaye, France, which appeared in *The New York Times* three days earlier. The headline reads "Victory at Teruel is Hailed with Joy in Insurgent Spain," with subheadings reading "Troops Ordered to Pursue Retreating Loyalists to Consolidate Triumph" and "Madrid Denies Defeat."[81] The Associated Press would correct its account the following day in *The New York Times*, reading "Government and Insurgent advices [sic] indicated tonight that the critical battle for Teruel still raged with undiminished fury despite earlier Insurgent reports that the city had been captured."[82]

Reporting from the Republican side was, generally speaking, more honest than the equivalent reporting done from the other side. Nonetheless, correspondents with the Republic were not always scrupulous in their reporting, perhaps most commonly in relation to the "Red Terror," as it was often called — violence directed against civilian elements in areas controlled by Republicans. Indisputably, certain elements on the Republican side did employ terror as a weapon against their political opponents — Paul Preston estimates that, throughout the course of the war, as many as 55,000 civilians were killed in the Republican zone, with most of the

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[80] Herbert L. Matthews, "Teruel Still Held by Loyalist Army, Visit There Shows." *The New York Times*, January 5, 1938, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.
[81] The Associated Press. "Victory at Teruel is Hailed with Joy in Insurgent Spain," *The New York Times*, January 2, 1938. ProQuest Historical Newspapers.
[82] The Associated Press. "Battle for Teruel Still Being Fought in 2 Feet of Snow," *The New York Times,* January 3, 1938. ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

violence directed against members and the clergy and figures on the political right.[83] But, he writes, much of that violence occurred in the early days prior to and during the Nationalist uprising, when the Republic was experiencing major turmoil as it attempted to find its footing after the structures responsible for law and order were lost.[84] Republican violence had a marked retributive character, with much of it sparked by reports of atrocities committed by Nationalist divisions, or the aerial bombardment of Republican cities.[85]

Some correspondents on the Republican side of the conflict leapt at the chance to report these sensational stories. Knightley writes that "serious attempts" to report on the atrocities committed on the Republican side were "buried in an avalanche of reports based on the flimsiest evidence, exaggerated to extract the maximum horror, and disseminated…by professional propaganda agencies."[86] The *Associated Press* reporter H. Edward Knoblaugh reported on a dinner conversation in his 1938 book *Correspondent in Spain*, during which five Spanish Anarchists boasted about inflicting humiliating acts of violence upon a pair of priests.[87] In another instance, Sefton Delmer (*Daily Express*) dispatched rumours of mass killings in Barcelona — despite his having been barred from the city, and thus being unable to substantiate this claim.[88] Stories of this sort, which put in the minds of many readers an image of the Republicans as a frenzied, lawless and violent mob, did much to consolidate public opinion in favour of the Nationalist forces during the early days of their uprising. Often, this public opinion failed to grasp that anticlerical sentiment in Spain was political more than religious. When supporters of the Republic directed violence against priests of churches, Beevor argues it was largely due to the Church's affiliation with the conservative elite in Spain, which was in the

[83] Preston, *We Saw Spain Die*, 15-16; Beevor, *The Battle for Spain*, 81
[84] Ibid.
[85] Ibid.
[86] Knightley, *The First Casualty*, 198
[87] Ibid.
[88] Preston, *We Saw Spain Die*, 15-16

process of overthrowing the nation's fledgling democracy.[89] In the United States, honest reporters like Matthews were castigated by American Catholic leaders as "rabid Red partisans" because their coverage tended towards sympathy for the Republican side.[90] Beevor writes that in the early days of the war, "little was done, or could be done" by correspondents to check the veracity of these atrocity reports. Nonetheless, they dominated the war for international sympathy in the initial stages of the conflict — sympathy which would only swing back to the Republic in 1937 with the destruction of Guernica.[91]

As in the case of Guernica, the Siege of Madrid, and the earlier reporting on Church burnings and the "Red Terror" in the Republican zone, coverage of the conflict in foreign news publications played an instrumental role in shaping public opinion. But the work of foreign correspondents themselves, instrumental as it was, is only part of the story. For any news of the civil war to leave Spain and reach the rest of the world, it first had to pass through the Foreign Press Office. Censoring and approving dispatches before they could be sent was a key function of the office, but they were also responsible for accommodating the needs of correspondents and providing them the necessary documentation needed to do the work. Power and authority were, on the whole, less centralized in the Republic than they were among the Nationalist rebels — leading to different approaches being employed when handling foreign correspondents in different areas of Spain and at different times of the war. Broadly speaking, the approach to press management became less restrictive over the war, as figures within the Foreign Press Office recognized the value of correspondents to make the case for their cause internationally. Additionally, as George L. Steer of *The Times* — the journalist responsible for breaking the news of German involvement in the Guernica bombing — attested, the relevant press management

[89] Beevor, *The Battle for Spain*, 82-83
[90] Matthews, *A World in Revolution*, 30-32
[91] Beevor, *The Battle for Spain*. 81

authorities in the autonomous regions of Spain — Catalonia and the Basque Country — also differed from the rest of the Spanish Republic[92].

From July 1936 until Franco's siege of Madrid in November, the Republic's approach to press management underwent significant change. Madrid was the original base of operations for the Republican press office, but the earliest efforts were shoddy and inefficient. Preston writes that the censors at this time did not speak English, requiring a Spanish translation to be provided before they could approve or censor a given dispatch. They also operated with no overarching standards or guidelines, leaving the question of what information was or was not acceptable for transmission up to the individual censors.[93] By September, censorship efforts in Madrid were significantly more standardized; on September 4, Francisco Largo Caballero replaced José Giral as Prime Minister, and also took on the post of Minister of War. Largo Caballero appointed Julio Álvarez del Vayo as Foreign Minister (state) who in turn appointed Luis Rubio Hidalgo as Chief Censor of the Foreign Press and Propaganda Office.[94] In 1937, Caballero's successor Juan Negrín abolished the Ministry of Propaganda — established under José Giral — and subsumed responsibility for domestic and foreign propaganda, including interactions with the press, under the Ministry of State. Lester Ziffren of the *United Press* stated that, as both Álvarez del Vayo and Rubio Hidalgo had backgrounds in journalism, they "knew what newspapermen thought of censorship in general and tried to make it as light as possible."[95] Ziffren wrote that Rubio Hidalgo limited censorship to troop movements, military plans and executions — as well as tensions between factions within the Republic.[96] These were notably much more lenient standards than were imposed upon the domestic press. However, even with the relative freedoms

[92] Preston, *We Saw Spain Die*, 203-204
[93] Ibid., 28
[94] Ibid., 29
[95] Lester Ziffren, "The Correspondent in Spain," *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 1, no. 3 (1937), 114., http://www.jstor.org/stable/2744677
[96] Minchom, *The Spanish Civil War in the British and French Press*, 51.

afforded to journalists in Republican Spain, news organisations often relied on Spanish news outlets when additional information or details were required.[97]

Both foreign and domestic press were initially muzzled, a fact which shocked the American veteran journalist Louis Fischer. Upon his arrival in Barcelona, Fischer was unable to answer the question of whether Irun had fallen — in reality, it had fallen weeks ago, but the Republic had not announced it. An excerpt from Fischer's diary puts the issue plainly: "The daily War Office reports are replete with victories…It would be difficult to understand after collating all these broadcasts why the enemy is approaching Madrid."[98] Fischer leveraged his connections with Álvarez del Vayo — in Madrid, correspondents often moved in the same social circles as Republican officials and members of the two groups were often personally acquainted with one another — to allow the foreign press to report with a greater deal of accuracy, arguing that publishing the truth would be beneficial for the Republican cause.[99] This change in what foreign correspondents could send back was noticed by Ziffren. "Consequently," he wrote, "more accurate news was published abroad about the true situation than was printed in Spain," as the Foreign Press Office under Rubio Hidalgo recognized the wisdom in "[admitting] a fact immediately rather than [trying] to deny" something that would inevitably be printed elsewhere.[100] Domestically, the Spanish press were limited by censors to printing material which would "strengthen the public morale," whereas international press were permitted to report on Republican defeats.[101] On the home front, the Republican war effort needed to maintain morale, but internationally, demonstrating honesty by admitting defeats (which the Nationalist forces publicized anyway) was a more effective path to garnering sympathies — and lent the Republic

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[97] Ibid., 34-3
[98] Preston, *We Saw Spain Die*, 29.
[99] Ibid.
[100] Ibid.
[101] Ibid.

significant credibility with which they could capitalize on very real instances of Nationalist atrocities. As Constancia de la Mora — who replaced Rubio Hidalgo as head of the Foreign Press bureau in November 1937[102] — put it:

> I knew, as all of us did — that the cause of the Republic depended on the *world* knowing the facts. Consider how we were maligned at the outset of the war and how later on, as the tragic months wore by, understanding began to dawn even among the most unlikely people… and so I accented my work towards helping them find out facts for themselves by giving them whatever facilities we could scrape together for their work. Passes to the front, of course. Cars whenever we could get them. Petrol for those cars.[103]

As Franco's forces neared Madrid in November 1936, conditions deteriorated within the city and Republican censors struggled to maintain control. Arturo Barea — writer of the autobiography *The Forging of a Rebel* — had begun working as a censor in Madrid's Telefónica building, where the city's press office was held, in September of that year. Despite the greater range of material the foreign correspondents could send back, Barea believed that censorship efforts were simultaneously too strict and limited; newspapers could not report that Franco's forces were advancing, but they managed to report on the impending flight of government officials, as well as some journalists, to Valencia.[104] Among those officials was Rubio Hidalgo, who on November 6 instructed Barea to finish dismantling the press office and flee to Valencia.[105] Barea ignored these instructions, choosing instead to stay in Madrid, but reestablishing control over the Madrid bureau in the absence of Rubio Hidalgo took him a number of days. During this time, as Barea put together a "flimsy structure" of himself and five others who had remained in Madrid, a number of "damaging dispatches" got out, prompting the involvement of Mikhail Koltsov, the *Pravda* and *Izvestia* correspondent.[106] Finding the bureau in

[102] Ibid., 78
[103] Constancia de la Mora, *In Place of Splendour* (London, Michael Joseph Ltd, 1940), 288
[104] Ibid., 32-33
[105] Arturo Barea, *The Forging of a Rebel* (Pushkin Press, 2019), 596-597
[106] Ibid., 609-611

disarray, Koltsov and Barea visited the War Ministry, where it was decided that the Madrid bureau would continue operation under the General War Commissariat with Barea at its head.[107] Carrying on the efforts of the Foreign Press bureau in Madrid was not easy. As Barea describes it:

> I was exhausted beyond measure…the responsibility for censoring the international press had fallen on my shoulders, together with the care of the war correspondents in Madrid. I found myself in perpetual conflict between the contradictory orders from the Ministry in Valencia on the one side, and from the *Junta de Defensa* or the War Commissariat of Madrid on the other, short of staff, incapable of speaking a word of English and forced to face a horde of journalists nervously excited by their own work at a battle front barely a mile away.[108]

With the help of Ilsa Kulcsar, an Austrian socialist volunteer in the Madrid Foreign Press bureau, Barea relaxed certain aspects of the censorship apparatus in Madrid. Kulcsar shared many of Barea's concerns with Republican censorship and propaganda efforts at the time, describing how they "made our defeats…inexplicable, our successes unimportant, our communiqués ludicrous, and [gave] foreign Fascist propaganda an easy victory."[109] Following this discussion, the two agreed to utilise their position in the Foreign Press Bureau to persuade their higher-ups in the Foreign Ministry to change their tactics.[110] One crucial change made by Barea and Kulcsar during their time running the Madrid bureau was allowing correspondents to report on the raid of the German embassy in Madrid by Republican police and militiamen.[111] The *New York Times* coverage of this event (likely by Matthews) reports that Republican investigators had been aware that the embassy was "sheltering Spanish political refugees and storing arms and ammunition."[112] The *Associated Press* similarly recognized German and Italian

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[107] Ibid., 610-613
[108] Ibid., 616
[109] Ibid., 619
[110] Ibid.
[111] Preston, *We Saw Spain Die,* 36
[112] "Arms found in Embassy." *The New York Times,* Nov 26, 1936. ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

recognition of the Nationalist insurgents as cause for the raid, but did not report on the seizure of firearms.[113]

Rubio Hidalgo remained hostile to Barea, seeing his effort to preserve the Madrid bureau as usurpation — despite recognition from the War Ministry that preserving press management efforts in Madrid was strategically important.[114] In December 1936, Barea and Kulcsar were summoned to Valencia — where Rubio Hidalgo had been located since fleeing Madrid in early November — and Kulcsar was briefly arrested. Despite her arrest and Rubio Hidalgo's vendetta against Barea, Rubio Hidalgo agreed to send Barea back to Madrid with an official appointment as the head of foreign press censorship; by this point, the city's fall no longer seemed inevitable, and a sense of normalcy had gradually returned.[115] Even Rubio Hidalgo, despite his personal grievances with Barea, had to recognize the necessity of continuing foreign press management in Madrid. With formal endorsement from his higher-ups in both the Foreign Ministry (Rubio Hidalgo) and the War Ministry, Barea could continue to pursue his strategy of lenience and assistance towards correspondents. This work brought him into regular contact with Vladimir Goriev, a Russian military advisor involved in the defense of Madrid, who dedicated much of his time to reviewing the censorship of the Foreign Press Bureau. Goriev at times disagreed with the censorship practices of the bureau under Barea and Kulcsar, expressing concern over matters of military intelligence.

Goriev, however, was also a critical observer of international press coverage, and had observed a trend; over time, coverage of the Republic had changed from "open animosity against

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[113] The Associated Press."Madrid Militiamen Raid and Seal Embassies of Germany and Italy: Spanish Rightists are Ejected from the Reich Building -- Berlin is Amused and Rome is Angered by the Seizures -- Americans are Ready to Leave the Capital. Fascist Embassies Seized by Madrid." *The New York Times*, Nov 25, 1936, ProQuest Historical Newspapers

[114] Preston, *We Saw Spain Die,* 38

[115] Barea, *The Forging of a Rebel*, 653; Beevor, *The Battle for Spain*, 182-185.

Republican Spain to straight reporting" — especially among conservative or moderate papers.[116] Goriev's observation was undoubtedly due to the efforts of figures like Barea and Kulcsar to loosen censorship and promote positive relations between the government and the foreign press.

NATIONALIST PRESS MANAGEMENT

From the early days of the rebellion, Franco and the other nationalist leaders — Mola, Sanjurjo, Goded and Quiepo de Llano — saw the necessity of a government agency to manage relations between the international press and the rebel forces. After extensive conspiracy and plotting, the insurrection which would become the civil war broke out on July 17 and 18, 1936. On August 9th, shortly after arriving in Seville, Franco founded the nationalist government agency which would handle international press correspondents — the *Gabinete de Prensa*.[117] Although this agency would change in both name and management several times throughout the civil war's duration — the *Gabinete* became the *Oficina de Prensa y Propaganda* in late August 1936, and was rebranded again as the *Delegación para Prensa y Propaganda* in early 1937[118] — its approach to the foreign press was generally consistent throughout the conflict. Contrary to the approach taken by the Republicans, which became more open and less restrictive as the authorities in Madrid, Valencia and Barcelona embraced the value of international sympathy, the Nationalist approach emphasized tighter controls and less access for foreign correspondents, as well as stricter censorship and harsher punishments.

The leadership of the *Gabinete de Prensa* was filled, from the beginning, with loyalists to the leaders of the rebellion. At its founding in early August 1936, the leader appointed by Franco was Juan Pujol Martínez, a staunch monarchist who had previously worked for the right-leaning

[116] Barea, *The Forging of a Rebel*, 656.
[117] Preston, *We Saw Spain Die*, 107
[118] Ibid., 107-116

Spanish newspaper *ABC* and the Third Reich-supported newspaper *Informaciones*, where he served as editor. Pujol Martínez was also deputy in the *Cortes*, belonging to the right wing *Confederación Española de Derechas Autónomas* (CEDA) and had aided Sanjurjo in his attempted coup d'état in 1932.[119] His deputy, Joaquín Arrarás, was a member of the far-right group *Acción Española* and enjoyed a close personal relationship with Franco. Luis Antonio Bolín, the press officer who worked most closely with foreign journalists on the ground, had also reported for *ABC* as its London correspondent, but was likely given his position as a reward for his involvement in hiring the plane which transported Franco from the Canary Islands to Morocco at the very beginning of the rebellion.[120] Bolín had also been sent to Italy to request assistance from the Fascist government. Pujol Martínez's term was short lived; Franco would replace him with General José Millán Astray in autumn 1936, placing him at the head of the expanded *Oficina*.[121]

Paul Preston writes that in the first few months of the rebellion, foreign correspondents were permitted to accompany nationalist forces as they progressed towards Madrid. Given the approach taken by the nationalists for the rest of the war, that they began the conflict by allowing foreign correspondents to be there as first-hand witnesses is highly irregular. This practice was swiftly curtailed, however, because, in Preston's view, the "trail of slaughter" left in the wake of nationalist forces was disadvantageous to the image and legitimacy of the regime.[122] This change in approach coincides with what nationalist press officer Luis Bolín wrote much later in his memoir *Spain, the Vital Years*, although his writing is marked by a highly sanitized, propagandistic style of language that blames the change on the poor behaviour of foreign

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[119] Ibid.
[120] Ibid.; Francis McCullagh, *In Franco's Spain: being the experiences of an Irish war correspondent during the great civil war which began in 1936* (Burns, Oates & Washbourne ltd, 1937), 104-107.
[121] Preston, *We Saw Spain Die,* 108-9
[122] Ibid.

correspondents, rather than acknowledging any atrocities committed by rebel forces. Here, he writes:

> I spoke to General Franco. Unless we acted promptly to establish our case, I said, the blame for what was happening might eventually fall upon us. Why not allow foreign correspondents to accompany the detachments establishing law and order in the *pueblos* then being captured, where they could speak freely with the inhabitants and learn the truth for themselves? Franco acquiesced readily… Meanwhile, not all correspondents attached to us were submitting their writings to censorship, as is customary and usual in all wars… we got to know that some of these journalists, after spending a few days with us, were taking advantage of the freedom which they enjoyed to file their pieces under other names in Tangier or Gibraltar, with complete disregard for the rules of fair play.[123]

Bolín goes on to state that he "recalled the restrictions imposed on War Correspondents with the British during World War One," having been a war correspondent with the British forces at that time, and that such measures, "though far less strict, were rapidly introduced, and in Seville a Press Office was established, which [he] directed for a brief period."[124] In October, following the "capture of Toledo" — which had been held by Nationalist sympathizers, but was under siege by Republican forces between July and late September 1936 — Bolín writes that management of the foreign press fell to him, and he "endeavoured to do this on a similar pattern to what [he] had seen on the British Front in France."[125]

To understand the approach taken by Millán Astray, Bolín, and the other figureheads of the nationalist press office, it is necessary to briefly discuss the press management and censorship strategies employed by Britain during the First World War, especially since Bolín claimed inspiration from this approach. Kevin Williams argues that the origins of the First World War brand of news management originated in the earlier conflicts of the twentieth century — the second Boer War (1899-1902), and in particular the Italian-Turkish war (1911-12) and the

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[123] Luis A. Bolin, *Spain: The Vital Years* (London: Cassell, 1967), 186
[124] Ibid., 187; Herbert Rutledge Southworth, *Guernica! Guernica!: A Study of a Journalism, Diplomacy, Propaganda, and History*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), 416
[125] Bolín, *The Vital Years*, 219

Balkan conflicts of 1912 and 1913. During these conflicts, a shift in attitude towards the war correspondent from government and military authorities is visible, and the trends which would dominate the process of war reporting during the First World War can be observed.[126] Reticence to distribute press passes or to allow correspondents to see the front and prohibition of contact between correspondents and soldiers forced correspondents to rely on unverifiable accounts — quite often these were the official sources of events which were accessible in the cities in which they were based.[127] As in Spain during the Civil War, war correspondents were heavily limited by the available communication infrastructure such as telephones, telegraph lines, cables and mail routes.

These trends would be consolidated during the First World War under Lord Kitchener, who was appointed Secretary of State for War. Once appointed, Kitchener established the Press Bureau in August 1914 and regulated all communication to and from the front. Correspondents were also banned from the front, and were subject to arrest and expulsion if found there.[128] Williams argues that this led, from July to September 1914, to certain correspondents with an adventurous streak flouting the rules and coming up with creative workarounds to find their stories and send them home. In September 1914, Kitchener appointed a War Office correspondent — Lieutenant Colonel Ernest Swinton — who acted as liaison between war correspondents and military authorities until July 1915, providing the press with highly censored stories from the front.[129] From 1915 to 1918, Williams writes, the approach changed to embedding specific correspondents on the front, who would act as correspondents for "British and American press as a whole rather than for their individual publications" — a strategy

[126] Williams, *A New History of War Reporting*, 68-73
[127] Ibid.
[128] Williams, *A New History of War Reporting*, 76-77
[129] Ibid., 78-79

permitted by the stagnation of trench positions, which rendered management of these correspondents much easier for military authorities.[130] Through this, he argues, they became incorporated into the war effort as a whole, with figures as prominent as Prime Minister David Lloyd George, and *The Times* and *Mail* owner Lord Rothermere both recognizing their purpose was not to tell the truth, as one would expect of the press, but to disseminate propaganda for the British government. Kitchener's Press Bureau, at this point, was not limiting itself to censoring sensitive military information but "anything likely to upset the public and the prosecution of the war."[131] The system employed following the recapture of Toledo and the establishment of a press bureau in Salamanca closely follows the British model. As Bolín describes it, members of the press were given passes in Salamanca, after which journalists could be escorted to the front by press officers in specially designated vehicles. "The need for these arrangements," Bolín writes, "was obvious despite the protests of a few who would have preferred to roam freely."[132]

In censoring and threatening journalists, Nationalist authorities did not limit themselves to the written word. Film images, they realized, could be important too. This first became apparent when reports of the Badajoz massacre followed the city's capture on August 14, 1936. These reports got out of Spain shortly after the massacre took place, and were both embarrassing and damaging to the Rebel cause abroad. Beevor describes it as the "first propaganda battle of the war," citing how Nationalist losses were deliberately exaggerated."[133] Nationalist press officers like Bolín did their best to suppress evidence of their crimes, including the mass execution of as many as 1800 Republican militia and civilians in the city's bullfighting ring, but the news escaped anyway. Jay Allen of the *Chicago Daily Tribune* testified to the scale of

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[130] Ibid.
[131] Ibid., 79-82
[132] Bolín, *The Vital Years*, 219
[133] Beevor, *The Battle for Spain*, 91

atrocities committed following the city's capture, writing that suspected "Reds" were being rounded up, corralled into the bull ring and executed with machine guns.[134] While the press authorities attempted to suppress the story, others in the Nationalist leadership, like General Gonzalo Queipo de Llano, exploited the grisly details for broadcast on Radio Seville as a means to intimidate Republican-controlled towns on the path to Madrid with lurid details of brutality, often incorporating threats of sexual violence.[135] Predictably, the foreign press was withheld from the front during the Nationalist recapture of Toledo a month later.[136] As with the Republicans, attitudes towards what information proliferated inside Spain's borders varied significantly from the information that was allowed to leave the country. Republicans needed to tightly control news of defeats in the domestic press to preserve morale, but relaxed their censorship of foreign correspondents to meet the foreign policy goals necessary for their survival[137]. By contrast, much of the Nationalist leadership valued the spread of atrocity stories within Spain as a means to demoralize their opponents, but preserving their image abroad was necessary to maintaining an advantageous status quo — intervention from their Fascist allies in Italy and Germany, while Europe's democratic powers maintained a policy of non-intervention.

The Badajoz massacre was, then, perhaps the first international embarrassment for the Nationalist insurgents. René Brut (*Pathé* Newsreels), alongside Jean d'Esme (*L'Intransigeant*), were issued permits to visit the front in August 1936 from the Nationalists' newly established press office in Seville. On August 17, they arrived in Badajoz, where Brut photographed the countless dead bodies and scenes of carnage he observed there, paying an acquaintance to

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[134] Jay Allen, "Slaughter of 4,000 at Badajoz, 'City of Horrors,' is told by Tribune Man." *Chicago Daily Tribune*, August 30, 1936, retrieved from https://www.newspapers.com/
[135] Ibid., 91-92
[136] Ibid., 93
[137] Preston, *We Saw Spain Die*, 29; Constancia de la Mora, *In Place of Splendour*, 288; Minchom, *The Spanish Civil War in the British and French Press*, 14-15.

smuggle the film through Portugal and on to Paris.[138] On September 5, Brut's application for an exit permit was denied, and shortly thereafter he was arrested at Bolín's orders for sending out film "unfavourable" to the Nationalist cause. At Bolín's insistence, Brut sent a telegram to Paris requesting the film rolls be returned for inspection. *Pathé* did so, although not before revising the contents of the film first. In total, Brut was incarcerated for five days. Every morning, he says, he "trembled at the thought of being designated for one of those trips which took the prisoners to a destination from which nobody ever returned." His fellow prisoners were not all journalists, but it is telling that, even as a member of the international press, he feared execution — a concern no doubt worsened by Bolín's threatening him with "the worst" should he be found responsible for spreading evidence of the Nationalist crimes at Badajoz.[139]

Bolín's fury at the spread of the Badajoz story is recorded in Arthur Koestler's book *Spanish Testament*. Koestler, then using press credentials from the London *News Chronicle* to support his cover as a Nationalist sympathizer, reports Bolín being in a "towering rage" that morning, following the arrest of another French correspondent for *L'Intransigeant*. Koestler echoes Brut's claim, stating Bolín threatened to shoot him for filming the aftermath at Badajoz. Koestler, notably, claims Brut was imprisoned far longer (three weeks) than in the account in *Guernica! Guernica!* Koestler also claims Bolín threatened to withhold front visits from then on, except for those under direct military supervision, and suggests Bolín may have been responsible for the execution of Guy de Traversée (*L'Intransigeant*) in Majorca.[140] De Traversée was a journalist who had accompanied the Republican effort to recapture the island of Majorca in August 1936. He carried press credentials signed by Jaume Miravitlles of the Catalan

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[138] Southworth, *Guernica! Guernica!*, 415-416
[139] Ibid.
[140] Arthur Koestler, *Spanish Testament* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1937), 220; Southworth, *Guernica! Guernica!*, 416

Generalitat, which were examined by the Nationalist officials who had him shot, and his remains were subsequently burned.[141] Given Koestler's political inclinations and affiliation with the Comintern, the possibility that this account was exaggerated to portray the Nationalists negatively cannot be discounted, but the account otherwise squares with Brut's own claims about his treatment in Nationalist captivity, and matches the time frame with which Bolín states the Nationalists sought to impose tighter control over the foreign press.[142]

Bolín figures heavily in the accounts of many correspondents, and his hostility and unpleasant demeanour towards the foreign press is reported by both those sympathetic to the Nationalist cause and more neutral, "objective" reporters. As a press officer, Bolín was often responsible for escorting groups of correspondents to limited areas of the front, where the Australian correspondent for the *Daily Express*, Noel Monks, reports seeing Bolín spit on the remains of executed Republican soldiers and call them "vermin."[143] The *Daily Mail* correspondent Harold Cardozo, otherwise a sympathizer with the Nationalist cause, was less than impressed with the way Bolín ran things, writing that "journalists who were heart and soul in favour of the movement … suffered rebuffs almost without number," and that "generally speaking, every conceivable obstacle was placed in the way of the war correspondent in National Spanish territory."[144]

Francis McCullagh, the Irish veteran war correspondent, described how Bolín made himself "hated like poison" among the American and English correspondents:

> [Bolín] imagines … that he can browbeat and bully and humiliate the poor devils here because they naturally want to keep on good terms…It's [Bolín's] job to spot the good

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[141] Preston, *We Saw Spain Die*, 108-109; Southworth, *Guernica! Guernica!,* 416; Minchom, *The Spanish Civil War in the British and French Press*, 37.
[142] Koestler, *Spanish Testament*, 27-28; Bolín, *Spain: The Vital Years*, 186
[143] Noel Monks, *Eyewitness* (London: Frederick Muller, 1955), 73.
[144] Harold G. Cardozo, *The march of a nation, my year of Spain's civil war* (New York: Robert & McBride, 1937), 221

> ones, and to treat them as if they were gentlemen…but he treats them all as criminals. He has expelled a good many, and some of those victims have gone to Madrid and Bilbao, where they may yet find themselves in a position to harm both him and the Nationalist cause.[145]

Despite his political sympathies with the Nationalist cause and his antipathy towards the "Reds" in Madrid, McCullagh saw how Bolín's hostility towards the foreign press alienated them from the Nationalist cause and could be damaging to its image abroad:

> Moreover, on the other side … correspondents are treated much better. I have met dozens of fellows who are in Barcelona and Madrid, and they told me that, though there was hopeless confusion, they were always treated like brothers. [Bolín]'s opposite number on the Government side (likely Barea) isn't dressed up as an officer and doesn't receive visitors with a basilisk glare: as a rule he's a real journalist wearing civilian clothes.[146]

Bolín, for all his shortcomings as an intermediary between foreign correspondents and the Nationalist forces, suffered little in the way of career setbacks until the aftermath of the bombing of Guernica in April 1937. Shortly thereafter, however, he was replaced by Pablo Merry del Val as director of the press office in Salamanca as well as Burgos.[147] A key element of his response to Guernica was a rapid shifting of goalposts. First, Bolín denied any air activity near Guernica on the day it was destroyed; then he admitted, once it became clear that many eyewitnesses could testify to seeing Nationalist planes in the air that day, that there was activity, but that it was only directed at "legitimate military targets." Throughout, the official response maintained by Bolín was that the town had been burned by retreating Republican saboteurs.[148]

Until the destruction of the Basque city, international opinion was weighted heavily in the Nationalists favour — the Republicans' image had been damaged early on by atrocity stories, especially those of an anticlerical nature. After Guernica, however, international sympathies

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[145] Francis McCullagh, *In Franco's Spain: Being the experiences of an Irish war correspondent during the great civil war which began in 1936* (London: Burns, Oates & Washbourne, 1937), 106-107
[146] Ibid.,107-108
[147] Southworth, *Guernica! Guernica!*, 499
[148] Deacon, *British News Media and the Spanish Civil War*, 30; Southworth, *Guernica! Guernica!*, 387-88

shifted substantially towards the Republicans, owing in large part to the news coverage generated by journalists like George L. Steer and disseminated in major papers like *The Times* and *The New York Times*. Even papers like the *Daily Mail*, which heavily favoured the Nationalist cause and had multiple accredited correspondents reporting from their side of the conflict, ran stories decrying the destruction caused by Nationalist bombardment.[149] After Nationalist forces gained control of the town on 29 April, a few journalists were permitted to visit the ruined city. Their stories largely followed the official line provided by Franco, as exemplified by the statement released in *ABC* on the 29th, which read:

> We wish to tell the world, loudly and clearly, a little about the burning of Guernica. Guernica was destroyed by fire and gasoline. The red hordes in the criminal service of [José Antonio] Aguirre burned it to ruins. The fire took place yesterday and Aguirre … has uttered the infamous lie of attributing this atrocity to our noble and heroic air force.[150]

The mishandling of the Guernica story would have consequences for both the Nationalists' image on the world stage and for the structure of the *Delegación para Prensa y Propaganda* — the Nationalist agency responsible for handling the foreign press. As evidenced by the short turnaround from Bolín's handling of the Guernica story — which appeared in major English and American papers as early as the following day[151] — his mishandling of the Guernica story played a key role in his reassignment at the end of April 1937. Although the evidence for bombing was substantial, and had already been shared with the world by George L. Steer of *The Times* — including the involvement of German aircraft and pilots[152] — correspondents who accompanied Nationalist forces into the city were required to follow the narrative established by Franco. James Holburn, also of *The Times*, wrote in a lengthy dispatch from Vitoria on May 4, 1937 — which

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[149] "Air Raid Wipes Out Basque Town," *Daily Mail*, April 28, 1937. Gale Primary Sources.
[150] *ABC*, April 29, 1937, quoted in Antony Beevor, *The Battle for Spain*, 232.
[151] Southworth, *Guernica! Guernica!*, 13
[152] George L. Steer, "The Tragedy of Guernica, Town Destroyed in Air Attack, Eye-Witness's Account" *The Times*, April 27, 1937, quoted in Southworth, *Guernica! Guernica!,* 14.

was also published in *The New York Times* on May 5 — that public opinion was "disturbed" by the allegation that the Guernica fire was caused by incendiary bombs dropped by aircraft.[153] The lengthy article continues to say that a commission of civilian engineers was tasked with identifying the causes of the fire, feeling that sufficient evidence remained to exonerate the Nationalists of any wrongdoing. "That Guernica [sic], after a week's bombardment by artillery and aircraft, did not show signs of fire, supports the Nationalist contention that aircraft was not responsible for the burning of the town, which was bombed intermittently over a period of three hours."[154] Southworth contends that the misprinting "Guernica" in the first line, which was not bombed for a week, was likely a faulty translation in London, as the publication of the same article in the Argentine paper *La Nación* reads, instead, "that *Durango*, after a week's bombardment by artillery and aircraft, did not show signs of fire…" (emphasis mine).[155]

The New York Times gave precedence to Holburn's May 4 dispatch over their accredited correspondent with the Nationalists, whose much shorter article was largely repetitive in content. The two correspondents both arrived in Nationalist-controlled Guernica on May 3.[156] Carney wrote that:

> This writer found most of the destruction here could have been the result of fires and dynamitings, as the Nationalists claim, because the roofless shells of many buildings are still standing and huge shells dropped from plains [sic] do not hollow out buildings, leaving their four walls standing… In many respects Guernica presents the same picture of desolation that can be seen at Irun and Eibar and in part of Malaga where destruction by incendiary mobs before these cities were abandoned never has been questioned.[157]

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[153] "Inquirer Doubtful on Guernica Fire," *The New York Times*, May 5, 1937. ProQuest Historical Newspapers.
[154] Ibid.; Southworth, *Guernica! Guernica!*, 80-84, 430.
[155] Ibid.
[156] Ibid., 80
[157] William P. Carney, "Bombing Lacking Evidence," *The New York Times*, May 5, 1937. ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

The burning of Irun, which Carney mentions in his dispatch, was perpetrated largely by anarchist elements among the city's defenders — not Basque nationalists. It was also conducted as a scorched earth tactic after a prolonged battle over the city, when it became clear that, without the necessary ammunition, the defence of Irun could not continue.[158] The circumstances in Irun at the time it was abandoned were entirely dissimilar in Guernica, where sources approved by the Nationalists own censors stated the bombing took place over three hours — yet Carney compared the two in an effort to legitimize the official Nationalist narrative. George Steer of *The Times*' dispatch stating the opposite was printed in *The New York Times* directly below Carney's. Steer's article cites more than twenty eyewitnesses to the bombing, whom, aside from minor discrepancies over number of aircraft, confirmed the models of aircraft used and that the conflagration which destroyed much of Guernica was caused by their bombardment.[159]

On May 3, shortly before it received the dispatches from correspondents with the Nationalists, *The New York Times* published a second official statement about Guernica from the rebel authorities. The statement decried "many English and French papers" which, the statement said, were "using a comparatively minor event such as the hypothetical bombardment of a small town as the basis of a campaign designed to present Nationalist [Insurgent] Spain as anti-humanitarian … thus serving the end of the Soviet faction that dominates the Spanish Red [Loyalist] zone." The Nationalist forces, the statement continued, "energetically rejects" this supposed campaign against their reputation "and denounces these manoeuvres before the world."[160]

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[158] Beevor, *The Battle for Spain*, 116-117
[159] George L. Steer, "Priest Blames Airplanes: Correspondent Stresses Part of Bombs in Guernica Raid", *The New York Times*, May 5, 1937.
[160] "New Rebel Statement on Guernica," *The New York Times*, May 3, 1937. ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

The statement, though official in tone, betrays a hostility towards newspapers which printed information contrary to their official narrative. Far from a post-Guernica development, hostility and disdain for the press was a cornerstone of Nationalist press management culture. José Millán Astray, head of the *Oficina de Prensa y Propaganda* — a military officer who replaced the former head of the *Gabinete*, a right-wing journalist named Juan Pujol Martínez — took a belligerent, antagonistic attitude towards members of the foreign press while in this role, and encouraged subordinate press officers to follow suit.[161] Luis Bolín, clearly, was empowered by Millán Astray's example and approached his own job in this way. So, too, did another prominent (and oft-mentioned in the memoirs of journalists) press officer, Captain Gonzalo de Aguilera Munro. Aguilera, too, shared many of Millán Astray[162] and Bolín's reactionary views — especially those regarding the necessity of "cleansing" Spain through the mass murder of the state's enemies. These views were widely spread and normalized through the Nationalist officer corps, causing their free expression in front of members of the press. The Australian correspondent for *Daily Express*, Noel Monks, recalled Bolín's dehumanising treatment of executed Republicans while on press tours, where he would spit on their remains and deride them as "vermins" and "Reds" — emblematic of a cruel streak in Bolín that Monks saw as characteristically Spanish.[163] Aguilera, similarly, once told the *New York Herald Tribune* correspondent John Whitaker that "we have got to kill and kill and kill, you understand… It's our program, you understand, to exterminate one third of the male population of Spain. That will purge the country and we will be rid of the proletariat."[164] He also bragged about executing, at the outbreak of the war, six peasants who worked on his lands as a means of sending a message

[161] Deacon, *British News Media and the Spanish Civil War*, 25
[162] Geoffrey Jensen, *Irrational Triumph: Cultural Despair, Military Nationalism, And Ideological Origins of Franco's Spain* (University of Nevada Press, 2002), 146, 154-55
[163] Deacon, *British News Media and the Spanish Civil War*, 25
[164] Ibid.; Paul Preston, "The Answer Lies in the Sewers: Captain Aguilera and the Mentality of the Francoist Officer Corps" *Science & Society* 68, no.3 (2004), 286-288

to the others. The distinctly military, rather than journalistic, background of these figures is significant — of the major figures responsible for Nationalist news management from 1936 to 1937, none but Bolín (excepting Pujol Martínez, who was not in his position for long) came from a journalistic background.[165] Despite his background, Bolín chose to portray himself as a military figure rather than a member of the press. As Percival Phillips of the *Daily Telegraph* noted, "General Franco made him an honorary captain in the Foreign Legion," but he was no soldier.[166] McCullagh observed how Bolín styled himself: "dressed as an officer of the Foreign Legion, with Sam Browne belt, riding breeches, and high boots," inviting disdain from actual soldiers who, Phillips inferred, did not believe he had earned the uniform.[167] Due to the distinctly military culture which dominated the *Oficina*, the desires of the press were not taken especially seriously and they were largely — in spite of their immense propaganda power — treated as a nuisance. Aguilera was an outlier here, as the tours he led were often reckless and got closer to the action than many correspondents had been prepared for, contrasting the general Nationalist approach to keep correspondents far from the front. In one instance, a car transporting Aguilera and four correspondents to Teruel, was hit by a shell, resulting in three deaths. Aguilera survived, alongside Kim Philby of *The Times*.[168] Nevertheless, correspondents who accompanied Aguilera were still subject to strict censorship; he was responsible for conducting press tours of Guernica following the bombing, and the journalists on these tours were required to follow the official Nationalist line — that the burning had been caused by Basque sabotage, not Nationalist bombs.

Guernica was a turning point of sorts for the *Delegacion*. As previously stated, the mishandling of the news led to a loss of faith in Bolín, and he was swiftly replaced in Salamanca

[165] Deacon, *British News Media and the Spanish Civil War*, 25
[166] McCullagh, *In Franco's Spain*, 104-107
[167] Ibid.
[168] Deacon, *British News Media and the Spanish Civil War*, 28

by Pablo Merry del Val. Meanwhile, Millán Astray had been replaced by Vicente Gay at the beginning of the year, when the *Oficina* was replaced by the *Delegacion*.[169] Gay, an extreme Catholic conservative and anti-semite, would not hold his post for long; he was replaced after Guernica by Manuel Arias Paz. Del Val and Arias Paz were a far cry from the rigid militarist culture espoused by Bolín and Millán Astray; the former was Oxford-educated, and the son of a diplomat, and the latter, while a military officer, showed a willingness to make concessions when he visited *The Times* in July 1937.[170] The replacement of Bolín with Merry del Val improved working conditions for correspondents, but it did not make information any freer. Certain topics, such as German involvement in Guernica, remained taboo.[171] Additionally, the censorship regime remained rigorous, correspondents' access to the front was heavily restricted, and credentials could be revoked at a whim.[172] Aguilera remained in the service; after the fall of Santander in August 1937 he drove American correspondent Virginia Cowles from the city to León, where she quoted him as saying "people are fools and much better off told what to do than trying to run themselves. Hell is too good for the Reds. I'd like to impale every one and see them wriggling on poles like butterflies."[173] Cowles wrote that an errant comment made by her to Aguilera resulted in Merry del Val revoking her exit permit.[174]

Deacon describes the final two years of the war, for the *Delegacion*, as a phase of "conciliation" where the earlier overt hostility cultivated by figures like Millán Astray and Bolín was dispensed with. Nevertheless, he notes, this metamorphosis was more one of attitude than anything else.[175] Their approach, under Arias Paz, remained highly restrictive and authoritarian

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[169] Southworth, *Guernica! Guernica!*, 499
[170] Deacon, *British News Media and the Spanish Civil War*, 33-34
[171] Preston, *We Saw Spain Die*, 129
[172] Deacon, *British News Media and the Spanish Civil War*, 34
[173] Virginia Cowles, *Looking for Trouble* (London: H. Hamilton, 1941), 84
[174] Ibid., 90-91
[175] Deacon, *British News Media and the Spanish Civil War*, 32

until the final days of the war. Correspondents continued to work under a regimen that would only publish non-compromising, state approved information — they were just free to do so without constant threats of execution and imprisonment.

CONCLUSION

An oft-repeated sentiment about the Spanish Civil War is that, for once, the history was not written by the victors. Despite the longevity of the Franco regime, which continued until 1975 — outlasting his fascist contemporaries — the cause of the Second Spanish Republic endured as a rallying point for antifascist movements until the present day. Foreign correspondents played a vital role in shaping the public's understanding of the conflict, drawing attention to events — such as the protracted defense of Madrid and the destruction of Guernica — which garnered sympathies as well as inspired horror. Both Nationalist and Republican recognized the foreign press as a powerful agent for affecting public opinion, but their approaches to them differed greatly. Republicans, though their image was tarnished from the beginning due to stories of anticlerical violence printed in the international press, recognized over time how removing obstacles from the path of foreign journalists could restore their image and inspire sympathy. The Nationalists, on the contrary, seemed to see the presence of the foreign press as a necessary nuisance — required to get their version of events published, but otherwise a risk to their international image. As a result, their press officers spent much of their time obstructing the efforts of journalists. By the time international opinion had turned against them, the Nationalists also recognized a change in approach was needed, but by that point much of the damage was already done.

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